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Chairman: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 65 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland): Allow me to congratulate the Chairman on his appointment to chair this Committee. I pay tribute also to the members of the Bureau and assure them of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

The outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) clearly marks the high point in terms of developments this year as regards the multilateral disarmament agenda. The unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons is indeed significant and provides an important reference point in the field of nuclear disarmament. The conclusions of the Conference undoubtedly strengthen the NPT regime. The agreement on practical steps towards nuclear disarmament defines a common framework for the way ahead and will, hopefully, contribute to the achievement of tangible results. Universal adherence to the NPT and full compliance with its provisions remain fundamental to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a central building block in the global order aimed at halting the proliferation of, and reducing reliance on, nuclear weapons. We welcome the decision by the Duma of the Russian Federation to ratify the CTBT. We urge those States that have not signed the Treaty to do so. We also call upon those States that have not yet ratified it to do so, especially those whose ratification is required for its entry into force.

The bilateral nuclear negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation are central to the non-proliferation effort and constitute the backbone of the nuclear disarmament effort. We welcome the ratification of START II by the Russian Federation in April this year. The Treaty is an important and integral part of a disarmament process which, hopefully, with START III, will include further deep reductions in the nuclear arsenals of both sides.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty remains a cornerstone of strategic stability. We welcome the reaffirmation to that effect by the United States and the Russian Federation and, more generally, the widely shared recognition of the need to preserve the Treaty.

The international community has for long recognized the potential value of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons — the fissile material cut-off treaty. That was reiterated by the NPT Review Conference. We call upon the

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Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty at an early date with a view to concluding a treaty within five years.

Concern about biological weapons has increased since the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention entered into force 25 years ago. The reasons are known and well justified. They provide the background for the almost six years of effort to negotiate an effective verification mechanism to reinforce the Convention. The deadline next year specified in the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group on a verification protocol is rapidly approaching. Failure to complete the protocol would send the wrong signal to those who might be contemplating the acquisition of biological weapons. There is clearly a need for a mechanism that can provide for transparency in this important area.

We share the view that the issue of small arms and light weapons is highly important, and are therefore pleased to note that it is now being addressed in earnest. The problems caused by the proliferation of these arms pose a common challenge, given the grave suffering that they cause in many parts of the world. The decision to hold next year the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is a step in the right direction. We share the opinion expressed by the Secretary-General in his Millennium Report that civil society and non-governmental organizations should be invited to participate fully.

The Ottawa process and mine-ban Convention, two and a half years after entering into force, is showing tangible results which are reflected in the production of fewer anti-personnel mines; an almost complete end to exports; reduced use of those mines; an increase in the destruction of stockpiled mines; a decrease in the number of victims; and increased demining of land. These clearly are impressive early results of a process which is highly significant, especially in terms of its humanitarian impact. We support the continuing efforts to move this process forward and to achieve full universalization of membership of the Convention.

It is our hope that the atmosphere prevailing here in the aftermath of the successful NPT Review Conference, and the reinforced commitment by our heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit, will mark the beginning of a new millennium, providing for fruitful work at the Conference on Disarmament and productive contributions by the General Assembly towards our common goal of achieving peace and security.

Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia) *(spoke in Russian)*: Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Chairman on his assumption of the leadership of the First Committee and assure him of our appreciation of his efforts to deal with the complex agenda before us.

I should like to begin with a quotation from General Assembly resolution 53/25, "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)", unanimously adopted at the fifty-third session, which emphasized in its eighth preambular paragraph that

> "the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, by which children learn to live together in peace and harmony that will contribute to the strengthening of international peace and cooperation, should emanate from adults and be instilled in children".

I hope that the Secretary-General will submit the appropriate programme of action to promote the implementation of the Decade pursuant to the resolution. However, these efforts are not worth making if substantial progress is not achieved in the process of global disarmament — that is, if adults cannot arrive at agreement on all key issues.

Georgia is a small country, whose history has been marked by destruction, wars and manifold difficulties throughout the centuries. Hence Georgia knows the value of peace, and very much appreciates the significant progress achieved in the process of disarmament and international security in the last four to five years. The signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the steady progress achieved in elaborating the verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are solid examples of our successful efforts. We are pleased to note that the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) followed suit and consolidated common ground for tackling problems still outstanding.

The world, exhausted by the nuclear threat, was relieved by the ratification of START II, as well as by the signing by the United States and the Russian

Federation of the agreement on the management and disposition of plutonium no longer required for defence purposes.

We further welcome the understanding between the two parties on the core issue of strategic stability — the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty — as expressed in the Joint Statement by the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation of 4 June 1999.

We are confident that this progress is an outgrowth of rapprochement and confidence-building between the nuclear-weapon States, permanent members of the Security Council. The joint statement issued by the permanent members on Mongolia's non-nuclear status is a striking manifestation of this kind of cooperation. These are most encouraging examples of how we can contribute to the future of the "Children of the world".

Like all other participants in this session, we cannot go so far as to believe that the nuclear threat is finally behind us. Much has yet to be done to make our dreams come true. First and foremost, it is incumbent upon the nuclear Powers to make joint efforts to make that dream come true and ensure a peaceful future for the "Children of the world".

Regrettably, some of the most powerful disarmament instruments — the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Conventions on chemical and biological weapons — have still not become universal. The political will of States, as demonstrated by developments on halting the process of producing fissile materials, is not sufficient. Tensions over the problems related to the ABM Treaty remain, while other issues have become the focus for long debates in the Committee. Members have found themselves forced over and over again to vote on the same draft resolutions.

It is with deep concern for our children's future that we note that the world continues to suffer from a host of inter-State and intra-State conflicts. According to United Nations data, nearly 25 million people — refugees and forcibly displaced persons — are seeking asylum or are left stateless. Suffice it to say that the civilian population, in particular women and children, account for more than 80 per cent of the victims of armed conflict. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of children under the age of 16 are combatants involved in fighting. In the past decade the death toll of victims of conflict has risen to 5 million.

It would seem obvious that armed conflicts are fuelled by the inflow of small arms, but we have failed to establish an effective mechanism to curb their proliferation. It is noteworthy that the number of people killed annually by small arms and light weapons far exceeds the number of those who died as a result of the atomic bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At this point I should like to recall the pledge in the Millennium Declaration

> "To take concerted action to end illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons". (*A/RES/55/2, para. 9*)

We hope that this commitment will be followed by concrete efforts aimed at its realization. In the same vein, we hope that the conference to deal with this matter, called for 2001, will yield positive results, all the more so since it is based on our common responsibility for the "Children of the world".

It is quite difficult to give a full list of all the small arms conferences and meetings held under the aegis of the United Nations in the past year, or within the framework of regional organizations or institutions, as well as all the publications on the issue in the same period. We must benefit from the recommendations and experience gained through this process to attain the chief goal set for the conference in 2001, which is to elaborate a final document that is not merely declaratory, but will open up new avenues to fight the smuggling of small arms.

We have to agree with the conclusion of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, as set out in document A/55/349, which stresses the need to create international norms, such as criteria to govern the transfer and receipt of small arms. It will be no easy task, however, to distinguish between licit and illicit trading in small arms, bearing in mind the right of self-defence enshrined in the United Nations Charter. At the same time, there must be no doubt about the need to assess the weight of arguments advanced by States that have decided to expand their stockpiles of conventional arms, for whatever reason. Therefore, it is of the highest priority to ensure transparency in arms dealings; effectiveness of the Register of Conventional Arms with regard to small arms; expansion of its

scope; and the provision of additional information on military holdings.

Georgia has been confronting acute problems since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Abkhazia, the western province of Georgia, still remains under the control of separatist forces, which violently obstruct the efforts of the international community to peacefully resolve the conflict. Although the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) provides for control of the levels of conventional arms, there are no means to verify the amount of weaponry possessed by the illegal, de facto government of the region. Such zones, commonly called "white spots", create the most fertile environment for all kinds of arms smuggling and criminal activity by a variety of groups. The connection between arms and drugs smuggling and terrorism is self-evident in this case. Given such circumstances, these "white spots" nurture other conflicts or sow instability beyond the conflict zone.

In such an environment the problem of small arms does not exist in isolation. In fact, the lack of control over the laying of anti-personnel mines in the region has considerably increased the number of victims among the local civilian population.

Furthermore, the illegal possession of small arms by civilians has become a normal part of daily life in Abkhazia. In many instances, the arms are used not only for self-defence, but to provide a livelihood by the abduction of people for ransom and outright robbery. In this situation of lawlessness incidents have become widespread throughout Abkhazia. Traditional programmes, such as weapons for development or weapons for goods, simply do not apply there. Indeed, each programme has to be tailored to fit the realities of a given region, although using market incentives would seem to be debatable in this case. There are no grounds for neglecting the possibility of exchanging weapons for goods or social infrastructure, however, as articles such as sewing machines, bicycles or construction materials could prove useful to allow for a life in peace.

Only the establishment of a stable peace using all means — ranging from preventive diplomacy to fostering economic development, and resorting if necessary to enforcement measures, again in the best interests of the "Children of the world" — will provide the solid foundation needed to overcome the negative consequences of illegal arms proliferation and accumulation.

The situation that has emerged in the world, and in particular in Abkhazia, calls for the problem to be addressed at the grass-roots level — establishing the sources and routes of the illegal arms traffic and pinpointing the individuals responsible, particularly in Abkhazia. That would be completely in line with the efforts of the international community to quell conflicts.

Transparency is needed not only with regard to information on arms stockpiles, but also with regard to the ways and means used to smuggle arms. This information should be brought to the attention of the international community. It is necessary, therefore, to establish a system to effectively monitor and detect the sources of this evil. It is common knowledge that arms transferred from existing stockpiles constitute a major part of those illegally possessed.

Georgia, together with neighbouring States of the Caucasus, Europe and Asia, is engaged in the process of implementing projects related to the transit of oil and gas via pipelines. The prospects for these projects are very promising, as they have enormous potential for the economic development of adjacent regions as well. Accordingly, the system of control of the proliferation of arms in the region must be attuned to the new requirements. In this context, we are in great need of assistance to strengthen our border-guard and customs services in Georgia. The issue of assistance to States in this matter merits thorough consideration.

Georgia is confident that only by concerted action will we make substantial progress towards realizing the goals to which we committed ourselves by adopting the historic Millennium Declaration.

Mr. Dragonov (Bulgaria): On 5 October I had the honour, in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament, to present to the Committee the report (A/55/27) of the Conference on its 2000 session. Today it is my duty and privilege to speak to draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.5, on the report of the Conference.

Very much in the spirit of the report itself, the draft resolution is straightforward and to the point. The text refers to the importance of the unique multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament and asserts the urgent need for the Conference to fulfil that role and

make progress on substance. It welcomes the strong collective interest of the Conference in commencing substantive work as soon as possible during the 2001 session.

The draft resolution also welcomes the Conference's decision, expressed in paragraph 35 of the report, to request the current and incoming Presidents to conduct joint consultations during the inter-sessional period in order to try to achieve this goal.

Under the draft resolution the General Assembly would further encourage the Conference on Disarmament to continue the ongoing review of its membership, agenda and methods of work.

In concluding, I should like to express the hope that, as with similar draft resolutions in previous years, this draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Calovski (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): I congratulate the Chairman on his election. I am sure that under his able chairmanship the Committee will complete its work successfully. In his important endeavour he will have the full support of our delegation. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election to their high posts.

The Committee is well prepared to have useful discussions of practically all aspects of disarmament and some important issues of the maintenance of international peace and security related to disarmament and arms control. The introductory statement of Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and the documents prepared by the Secretariat will help the Committee, as expected, to work in a result-oriented manner. I am very pleased to see in our midst Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, whose guidance has always been very helpful to the Committee.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to predict to what extent the Committee will succeed in moving the disarmament agenda forward, because of the present stagnation. It is essential to make every effort to that end. Our delegation will do its part.

In our view, the Committee's priority concern at this session should be implementation, in an interlinked manner, of the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration of September this year and of the results of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). One of the main reasons for the present unsatisfactory development of the disarmament and arms control process is that the process has not truly managed to develop its potential parallel with the international agenda for the maintenance of international peace and security, and for development as a whole. If this trend continues, we cannot realistically expect much better results this year or next year. The present lack of political will and readiness to move the disarmament process forward should be addressed, of course, in an appropriate and organized manner. If we do not obtain satisfactory results in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in the elimination of poverty, in stabilization and development efforts, in regional and global integration, and so on, it is difficult to expect much progress in the disarmament and arms control effort.

The present globalization of international life implies the speedy abandonment of stereotypes, both in substance and form. Even the best disarmament experts cannot move the process forward if their colleagues dealing with international security do not view their own efforts in the same way. We believe that disarmament and arms control efforts can help to make a reality of the determination of the heads of State and Government, expressed in the Millennium Declaration, to establish a just and lasting peace throughout the world in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Charter. The Republic of Macedonia considers such efforts to be of crucial importance for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Secretary-General, in his latest report (A/55/1) on the work of the Organization, has reminded us once again that disarmament continues to be a critical element of the United Nations strategy for peace and security, stressing steps to reduce the level of arms and curb proliferation, not only to make the world a safer place by reducing the propensity for conflict, but also to lessen the temptation for States to embark on costly arms races. We share that conclusion. The Secretary-General's warning that global military expenditures in 1999 increased for the first time in the post-cold-war period, reaching almost $780 billion, should be taken most seriously by all Member States and addressed as such.

The twenty-first century should be a century of cooperation, not of confrontation; of integration, not of

coexistence; of security and development, not of conflict and poverty. But that does not mean that the forces of progress will automatically be successful; success will come as a result of our efforts. The United Nations, as the global Organization for peace and international cooperation, should lead this change for the better. If the First Committee moves disarmament and arms control forward, it will make a huge contribution to this paramount endeavour of our Organization.

The situation in South-Eastern Europe is changing for the better. Recent developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are a very good illustration. For some time the region was the main security problem of Europe, with global implications. In the past we witnessed numerous negative developments. Because of that, the stagnation of the region reached unacceptable proportions. All the countries of the region experienced negative effects. But now there is a feeling that things could develop for the better and that the integration of the region within the Euro-Atlantic structure will go faster in all areas.

From the point of view of disarmament and arms control, however, the situation in the region will continue to be of concern for some time, simply because there are too many conventional weapons, too many small arms and light weapons, too many landmines to be demined, and so on. The region cannot sustain the present high level of military forces. Its integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures will require that all these aspects of disarmament and arms control in the region be addressed speedily and in an organized manner. The First Committee could influence developments in that direction. Speedy disarmament and demilitarization of the region, particularly concrete and practical measures to stop the illegal possession of, and trafficking in, small arms, should be seen as urgent. Demining should be speeded up as much as possible. In this respect, the speedy integration of the region into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is of paramount importance.

The unequivocal commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, to halt the spread of nuclear weapons, and to strengthen the standards governing the peaceful use of nuclear energy, made at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is in our view the most important result of the disarmament effort this year. Other positive results of the Conference are also very important. There is no reason, to judge by the point of view expressed in the Millennium Declaration, why this trend should not continue. Of course, the most important task of the international community at present is to convince Member States of the United Nations that are not members of the NPT regime to change their position and accede to the Treaty. All serious analysis has concluded that they will benefit from being parties to the Treaty and, even more important, that that will be the most important step towards overcoming the present security difficulties in the Middle East, South Asia and the Far East, and a blow to aspirations to become nuclear. In our view, acceding to the NPT is the best way to eliminate the nuclear danger and to strengthen international security.

We note that the number of parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has increased. It is very important that the Russian Federation has ratified the CTBT. The United States and other key States are expected to ratify the Treaty as well. International efforts to bring the CTBT into force as soon as possible continue to be a priority of many delegations, including my own. Nuclear armaments need no more modernization or improvement.

In the coming period, in our view, the international community should give absolute priority to the start of negotiations on the early conclusion of a universal and verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty. There is no political rationale for not doing so or for the present hesitation and inability of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to reach agreement on its programme of work.

Relations between the United States and the Russian Federation with regard to disarmament continue to be of the highest importance. The entry into force of START II, the commencement of negotiations on START III, and the functioning of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 remain the most important priority of the nuclear disarmament process. We have noted the positive statements of the Russian and United States delegations in the Committee in this regard.

In the past five years the problem of missiles and missile technology has become a matter of serious concern. It is clear that the proliferation of missiles and missile technology for weapons of mass destruction,

including nuclear weapons, has acquired such dimensions that it must be addressed. Taking effective measures to curb the proliferation of missiles for weapons of mass destruction would therefore be a welcome development.

We have always considered the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones to be a positive factor in the strengthening of international relations and the maintenance of international peace and security. We are pleased that the Disarmament Commission has adopted principles and guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. The most important, of course, is the principle that nuclear-weapon-free zones should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. We have welcomed all established zones, and we recognize the uniqueness of the Mongolia case. We appreciate the statement of the Government of Mongolia in this respect.

I should like to end this part of my statement by stressing that sustainable economic development and the elimination of poverty are the a key to better international relations and progress. The attainment of that goal needs no nuclear option. Abandoning the nuclear-weapon option and becoming a non-nuclear State can be extremely beneficial, as illustrated by Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

We remain preoccupied with the negative aspects of other weapons of mass destruction, and we support all efforts for their total banning and elimination. We are in favour of full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and support reinforcement of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). We note the candidacy of Geneva and the wish of the Government of Switzerland that the headquarters of the future biological weapons organization be in Geneva.

The Republic of Macedonia has welcomed the decision of the General Assembly to convene the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in June/July 2001. In the area of conventional weapons this undertaking has already acquired a deserved priority. Our task is to ensure that the Conference succeeds. We appreciate very much the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host the Conference. Preparations for it are going forward well, particularly in the Preparatory Committee. There are many good proposals. Of particular interest is the Swiss-French proposal to adopt a legal instrument on the marking, recording and tracing of small arms. The Conference will no doubt address many political, economic, social, security and other issues related to small arms and light weapons. It will be a very important event next year. We hope that its result will be to curb the present trafficking in these weapons and to strengthen international cooperation in dealing with the problem. For our region of South-Eastern Europe it is particularly important that the Conference should succeed and that we start to make progress in eliminating the huge quantity of small arms and light weapons illegally possessed and in stopping the illegal trafficking in them.

The Republic of Macedonia is very supportive of all efforts aimed at banning anti-personnel mines and of demining activities. We welcome the information that the production of and trade in mines has substantially dropped, and that as a result of demining fewer mine victims are being recorded. We must continue to support the Ottawa process. It is of particular importance for some countries of South-Eastern Europe. Promotion of the universalization of the mine-ban Convention is very important from a political and humanitarian point of view. In this respect, we note the role and contribution of Canada, Switzerland and Mozambique.

Many previous speakers have expressed their views on the work of the Conference on Disarmament. They noted with concern that the Conference, in spite of numerous discussions and efforts, has not agreed on its programme of work. The answers that we have heard so far to the question "Why?" differ. Our view is that the Conference on Disarmament will continue to struggle, and it is doubtful whether it will be able to start to function in the way in which the majority of Member States of the United Nations would like it to function. I will mention two reasons.

First, the arrangement of the work of the Conference is outdated. The present arrangement was suitable for the period of the cold war and coexistence, but it is not suitable for the present period of cooperation, integration and globalization. It is imperative that the Conference reform itself and change its method of work. It should stop working in numerous bodies and groups. It should conduct its business only in meetings of all members.

The second reason is the non-universality of the Conference. It is unacceptable that some Member States of the United Nations can be members of the Conference while others cannot. It is also unacceptable that member States of the Conference are entitled to decide whether a sovereign Member State of the United Nations can be a member of the Conference. It is not acceptable that a member State of the Conference can prevent a Member of the United Nations from becoming a member of the Conference. The Conference was not established to be an exclusive club of some Member States of the United Nations.

Some delegations stress that the main reason for the present unsatisfactory situation is the lack of political will to overcome it. Some say that the opposing positions of the nuclear and non-nuclear States is the main reason for the crisis of the Conference, in spite of the fact that the CTBT was negotiated there. There is probably truth in all this, but, whatever the reason, we must face the fact that the fundamental problem of the Conference crisis lies within itself and not outside. It is an outdated disarmament mechanism which needs serious reform. The sooner we face that fact openly, the better for the Conference on Disarmament.

Before I conclude, I should like to inform the Committee that my delegation, together with others, will submit an omnibus draft resolution (A/C.1/55/L.47) on the following agenda items: item 66, "Development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States", and, under item 67, "Maintenance of international security", sub-items (a), "Prevention of the violent disintegration of States", and (b), "Stability and development of South-Eastern Europe". The draft resolution is entitled "Maintenance of international security — good-neighbourliness, stability and development of South-Eastern Europe". We are collecting suggestions for the improvement of the text and will submit it to the Committee in due time. Our intention is that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote. We will be very pleased to receive suggestions in that direction. We are also taking care to see that the draft resolution does not have financial implications.

When I introduce the draft resolution I will say more about its message, substance and relevance, particularly at the present stage of developments in our region. For some time we have been endeavouring to promote a culture of good-neighbourly relations, so much needed in our region as well as in some other regions of the world. One of the most important parts of that effort is the disarmament, stability and development effort in the region. There have been four wars, and there are many conventional arms, small arms and light weapons and landmines. It is true that the region is out of the crisis period, but much remains to be done. We are optimistic, however. That is why the draft resolution is future-oriented. I hope that the Committee will support it. For the region to go forward, it is essential that its Europeanization be supported by all in a concrete and visible manner. Central to that effort is the implementation of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe.

Mr. Al-Malki (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express to the Chairman, on behalf of my delegation, our most sincere congratulations on his unanimous election. We are fully confident that his skill and diplomatic ability will be conducive to the successful conduct of the Committee's work, with the cooperation of the other members of the Bureau, whom we wish success. I cannot fail here to convey to his predecessor, Ambassador Raimundo González, our thanks and appreciation for steering the work of the previous session most wisely.

Despite the end of the cold war a decade ago, the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation, especially of nuclear weapons, has been a source of disquiet for the human race because of its dangers and implications. Such weapons threaten the security and peace of human life on this planet. States are still divided between those that possess and manufacture such weapons, and are able to develop them, and States that aspire to possess them.

The interest of the international community has been focused on the gravity of such weapons. World leaders have called for an international conference to decide on ways and means of eliminating the risks posed by such weapons.

My delegation confirms that negotiations to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, should be accorded the highest priority and seriousness by the international community because of the unimaginable disasters and predicaments that they may cause. Those who consider the percentages of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, will realize that they are much higher than those required for the security,

defence and deterrence policies of all States of the world. This impels us as members of this peace-loving Organization to redouble international efforts to provide a propitious environment for machinery that will eliminate such danger.

It is regrettable that the nuclear States are still unable to muster the political will to reach agreements to reduce their nuclear arsenals as a first step towards eliminating all kinds of lethal weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, we hope that agreement will be reached to hold a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in the near future.

There is no doubt that regional security is closely intertwined with international security. Therefore, the security and stability of the Middle East and the Arab Gulf require the building of confidence among political entities there. This can be achieved by seriously considering turning the area into an area free of weapons of mass destruction.

Israel's refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place its nuclear installations under the full-scope safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) creates a serious imbalance, poses a grave risk to regional security in the Middle East, and compromises the Treaty's universality, despite the fact that more than a quarter of a century has elapsed since it entered into force. This is a blatant flouting of the will of the international community in this respect; numerous demands by the international community have been to no avail. What Israel has achieved by using its light and heavy weapons against defenceless Palestinians and the martyrdom of the Palestinian child, Mohammed Al-Durra, in full view of the whole world, is clear evidence of Israel's abusive use of its internal forces, let alone its threat that it is capable of entering into a war with its neighbours in which it will triumph.

All the above confirms that Israel's military force is not defensive or for deterrence purposes only, but is a destructive, aggressive force to which Israel may have recourse at any time. Testimony to that is what is taking place today. We cannot fail here to refer to the unjustified acts perpetrated against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, whose victims are innocent citizens.

The illicit transfer of and trafficking in conventional weapons, especially light weapons, is a source of disquiet for us all, especially when they find their way to certain groups that ride roughshod over the right to life, peace and tranquillity by using such weapons in terrorist acts that destabilize many countries and pose a risk to their security and internal safety as a result of demands by terrorist groups. My country calls for specific ways to be found to reduce the flow of light weapons so that they will not fall into the hands of such groups.

Illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons is a crime to which Bahrain attaches great importance, because of its negative humanitarian, social and economic implications. There is a close link between such crime, organized crime and terrorism in general. Illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons is practically non-existent in Bahrain, because of the Government's effort to control this crime. Control measures include Law No.16 of 1976, which prohibits any person from trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Such weapons are not licensed, and severe punishments are meted out to those who possess them.

No one would disagree about the dangers posed by landmines. Thousands of defenceless citizens of all ages and groups have been victims of them. Therefore, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), and hope that all minefields will be demined. We call on all States that export such weapons to pause and contemplate before selling them to countries that may abuse them and thus cause scores of thousands of casualties. We have many examples of such situations.

World leaders at the Millennium Summit reconfirmed their desire to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim. They also decided to take concerted action to end, once and for all, the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Their Declaration impels us to confirm the necessity of implementing United Nations resolutions on disarmament and conventions and treaties in this respect. The implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy and of international conventions will provide an environment conducive to world peace and tranquillity. We are confident that international cooperation for arms control, whether of conventional or nuclear weapons, will always remain the goal of the United Nations in the third millennium, so that we may be able to build a human and cultural society where love and lofty ideals

prevail and where future generations live in peace, tranquillity and prosperity.

Ms. Chan (Singapore): The delegation of Singapore would like to express its warmest congratulations to the Chairman and his colleagues on their election to the Bureau. We assure them of our full support and cooperation and express our confidence that the Chairman will bring the Committee's work to a punctual and successful conclusion.

This session of the General Assembly is of special significance. As the Millennium Assembly, it has the special responsibility of initiating the implementation of the commitments made by our Heads of State during the recent Millennium Summit. This responsibility is one which we are pleased to see both Member States and the Secretariat taking seriously. The Summit Declaration recognizes that peace and security are closely intertwined with economic development in any country. Without economic prosperity, peace will not long endure.

Disarmament is a function of the security environment. We can draw a loose analogy with the domestic environment. Singapore practises total disarmament within its own borders, so to speak, among its own citizens. Our gun control laws are among the strictest in the world. That is because citizens know that they can rely on the efficiency and impartiality of the police and the judiciary to assure their security against armed lawlessness. That condition does not exist in the international context. There is no global police force or global judiciary to secure countries against external or internal violence. Such internationally constituted forces as can be deployed under the United Nations Charter are applied largely according to political considerations. Therefore, as long as the world consists of independent nation States, States will need the means to ensure their own security. That is why Article 51 of the United Nations Charter explicitly recognizes States' rights to self-defence. A world without weapons of any kind is not a practical or realizable dream. It would also not necessarily be a safer world. Total disarmament as a principle cannot become a reality unless States can be confident that they do not have to provide for their own security.

How can States be assured of their security? *Internationally and domestically, the rule of law is* what ultimately assures the stability of any community. In the community of sovereign States the rule of law is expressed by the network of multilateral disarmament treaties. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are among the most prominent examples of concerted efforts to introduce the rule of law into the international security environment. We believe that the NPT is still one of the cornerstones for nuclear disarmament. We support the extension of strong verification regimes, similar to that of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to other arms control conventions. We hope that a tight verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention can be agreed by the Ad Hoc Group of the States parties to the Convention as soon as possible. Building confidence, including through reliable verification procedures, is an indispensable aspect of any disarmament regime.

Weapons of mass destruction do not belong in the category of arms whose possession can, even in principle, increase State security. Their potential for huge destruction of life, and possibly even human civilization itself, renders them utterly unsafe, not only for those against whom their use is threatened, but also for neighbouring countries and their possessors. We welcome the successful outcome of the Review Conference of the NPT this year, and we hope that there will be greater progress in nuclear disarmament. Universal participation in, and individual respect by States parties for, the international legal regimes limiting the existence of weapons of mass destruction, is the surest way for the international community to secure itself against their threat.

Support for the rule of law in the international community is a cardinal principle for Singapore. It is for this reason that we urge all nations to accede to the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, and also urge the parties to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to continue to respect and comply with all its terms.

There is some momentum towards establishing multilateral legal regimes for conventional weapons. We recognize the suffering and loss of life caused by the uncontrolled and illicit proliferation in many regions of the world of conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons. These weapons are now used largely in conflicts within States rather than between them, in circumstances in which security is clearly damaged, rather than enhanced, by

their presence. We look forward to the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We hope that it will encourage States to take substantive and concrete steps to curb the illicit trade in these weapons. In this context, however, we reiterate that legitimate trade for purposes of self-defence and the maintenance of international law and order would not be an appropriate focus for the Conference.

In the design of suitable control regimes for conventional weapons, similar considerations apply as to the regimes for weapons of mass destruction. Universal participation, willingness to adhere strictly to the regime and effective verification mechanisms are the keys to success. Building confidence is necessary so that parties can be assured of each other's intentions. To attempt to get rid of entire categories of conventional weapons would be counter-productive. If a country considered that its security was being negatively affected by an arms control regime, it might choose not to participate, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the regime. While the proliferation of arms fuels conflict in many regions of the world, each conflict takes place in specific circumstances. An arms control regime that works well in one region may be less successful, or even counter-productive, when transplanted wholesale to deal with a different set of historical and geographical factors in another region. Particularly in the case of post-conflict situations, arms control regimes have to be placed in a wider developmental context that takes into account the need for economic development and good governance to sustain peace and security.

The Millennium Summit Declaration reaffirmed our commitment to end the scourge of war. Our goal is a safer world, where the peoples can live and prosper in peace and security. We believe that in a world of nation States this goal can best be reached by strengthening the international rule of law, including the development of a web of universal and strictly observed multilateral disarmament conventions, which also instil confidence. And, since we do not live in a perfect world, these conventions should not deny States the possession of the appropriate conventional armaments to satisfy their legitimate right of self-defence in the event that the international rule of law fails to deter aggression.

The disarmament process deals with the means by which States and peoples make war. Even as we deal with this front, we cannot neglect the intimate connection between conflicts and poverty and lack of development. If these root causes of war are not addressed, disarmament will not in itself achieve the goal of reducing the chances of conflict. Any achievements in disarmament are part of the wider work of the United Nations for the betterment of the peoples we represent.

Mrs. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): Allow me first to add my congratulations to those already addressed to the Chairman on his election and to express my confidence that under his skilful leadership substantive progress will be made in dealing with the important issues on the Committee's agenda. I also extend my felicitations to the other members of the Bureau.

I also take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the excellent work of the Chairman at the last session, Ambassador González, and to thank Mr. Dhanapala for his comprehensive and detailed statement on various disarmament and international security issues.

All of us are participants in the continuous and long-standing discussions at the international level on the ways of global development in the twenty-first century, the freshest and historically most important of which was the Millennium Summit.

The boundary of the millennium coincides with the tenth anniversary of the independent development of the Republic of Kazakhstan. All countries of the world evaluate the first decade of their independence as a major event in their history. In analysing the past and looking ahead, Kazakhstan is striving to be a worthy member of the international community as we enter the third millennium, able to contribute to the work of the United Nations, especially in the field of disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the maintenance of global security.

I should like to refer to some issues that are important to my country and have also been the subject of discussion by other delegations in the First Committee.

Kazakhstan proved its adherence to the process of freeing the world of nuclear weapons by joining the parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 1996 as a non-nuclear-weapon State. After the withdrawal of the last nuclear warheads from its territory in April 1995 and the elimination of

the remaining nuclear device at the Semipalatinsk test site on 31 May 1995, Kazakhstan became the second State after South Africa to voluntarily refuse to possess nuclear weapons. This positive contribution by my Republic to the field of disarmament is reflected in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

At that Conference, for the first time in the past 15 years, five nuclear-weapon States made a collective and long-sought unequivocal commitment to totally eliminate their nuclear arsenals. Despite the doubts and pessimism existing before the beginning of the Conference, these commitments and the adoption of the Final Document bear witness to the success of our work, which benefited from the considerable contribution and diplomatic skill of Ambassador Abdallah Baali of Algeria, with the support of many delegations.

We hope that the Conference's positive outcome will give a new impetus to the global nuclear disarmament process. In this connection, we welcome the ratification of START II and its relevant Protocols by the Russian State Duma. We also call on both parties to start negotiations and reach agreement on START III.

We welcome President Clinton's recent decision not to deploy a national missile defence system, which we regard as an opportunity for the continuation of negotiations on the preservation of one of the cornerstones of global strategic stability, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.

Proceeding from the necessity to fully strengthen the non-proliferation regime, Kazakhstan signed the CTBT in 1996. My country today participates practically and systematically in the work of increasing the efficiency of control over the observance of the Treaty's provisions.

As a result of the explosion of 100 tonnes of dynamite, which made the ground at the former Semipalatinsk test range shake, the last nuclear-weapon test site in the Degelen mountains was put out of action on 29 July this year. It was the third calibration experiment at the range as part of a series of Kazakh-American experiments. Simultaneously with the destruction of the test site, the experimental explosion was used to check and calibrate the nuclear-test International Monitoring System for conducting nuclear tests, created within the framework of the CTBT. The information received as a result of the experiments will allow the international community to discover and more precisely identify nuclear explosions — that is, distinguish them from earthquakes and explosions of commonly used explosive substances — and thus to ensure effective observance of the CTBT provisions and create monitoring systems that will make it impossible to conduct nuclear tests in any part of the world and keep them secret from the global community.

There are other types of weapons of mass destruction that pose no less danger than nuclear weapons. That is why it is vitally important not only to eliminate the old weapons of mass destruction, but also to establish a control mechanism to prevent the development of new types of such weapons. In 1993 Kazakhstan signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), with the purpose of strengthening the international regime for the non-proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction, and it will remain strongly committed to its obligations.

At the same time, it should be noted that the international instruments for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction — primarily the NPT, the CTBT and the CWC — have not yet gained universal support, and thus cannot be fully effective. The situation with regard to the ABM Treaty gives cause for concern. We call on all countries to radically change this situation and support the Secretary-General's proposal to hold an international conference to find ways to avert the nuclear threat.

In supporting the phased and steady process of nuclear disarmament, Kazakhstan is of the view that establishing an instrument to control the manufacture of fissile materials is the first stage. The stockpiles of enriched uranium and plutonium and the large quantities of fissile material received from destroyed nuclear warheads pose a threat to the non-proliferation process. In this regard, we call for negotiations within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, of which Kazakhstan has been a member since August 1999, aimed at the conclusion of a cut-off treaty with regard to fissile material for military purposes. We also welcome Russia's initiative to elaborate and implement, with the participation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an international project that would allow the phasing out of weapons-grade materials — enriched uranium and pure

plutonium — from use in civil nuclear-power production.

Transparency in the field of control and the reduction of conventional arms provide a good basis for preventing a destabilizing build-up of weapons in any region or an excessive concentration of weapons in any State. We support the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, to which we have provided information on a regular basis since 1992, and consider it to be the most important component of such control. We also welcome the broadest participation of States Members of the United Nations in the functioning of this important international instrument. In this regard, we also support the proposal to convene next summer the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We also welcome the convening of the informal inter-sessional consultations coordinated by the Chairman of the Conference's Preparatory Committee, parallel to the work of the First Committee, which will help us to be better prepared for the second session of the Preparatory Committee, scheduled for next January.

Kazakhstan fully supports the humanitarian orientation of the Ottawa Convention, whose goal is the complete elimination of anti-personnel mines. Kazakhstan is continuing to make its contribution to international efforts in this area and strictly observes the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines, including their re-export and transit. However, in our view, the movement for the complete prohibition of anti-personnel mines should be an ongoing and step-by-step process based on the mine Protocol to the Convention on inhumane weapons.

Kazakhstan, attaching paramount importance to the process of maintaining peace and stability at a regional and thus at a global level, follows with great attention the realization of the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We are confident that such a zone will constitute an important step towards strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and promoting general and complete disarmament. We will continue to participate consistently and constructively in the work being carried out to establish that zone. We express our gratitude to those delegations that have expressed understanding on this issue.

The non-nuclear States quite naturally asked about being granted security assurances, and have a right to expect firm legal guarantees. Kazakhstan fully shares the understanding that one possible way to solve this problem could be the adoption of a protocol on security assurances. We view positively Mongolia's contribution to the process of general and complete disarmament, and fully support its tireless efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We also welcome the statement by the five permanent members of the Security Council concerning security assurances for Mongolia, in view of its unique situation, and hope that they will take further steps promoting all aspects of Mongolia's external security, in accordance with resolution 53/77 D.

Kazakhstan highly appreciates the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which is an effective instrument in helping to create an atmosphere of cooperation and disarmament in the region. The Centre renders essential assistance to the five Central Asian States in drafting a treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan, consistently acting for the creation of security structures on the Asian continent, and fully abiding by its commitments to important international instruments, spares no effort to realize the initiative of convening the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). We are convinced that such a conference has a rational essence, and call on the United Nations and the Asian States to continue their support for the CICA process, in the interests of Asian and global security.

Finally, I again assure the Committee of our full support for efforts aimed at the adoption of important decisions on strengthening the non-proliferation regime and promoting regional and global security. We are ready to strengthen cooperation with all other delegations to achieve our common objectives.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Chairman on his election and to wish him every success in his work. I also congratulate the other officers of the Committee. I am confident, in view of the Chairman's experience and knowledge, that he will conduct the Committee's work in a professional manner which will lead to achieving the desired results. I also assure him of my country's readiness to cooperate with him in order to reach the successful conclusion of our work.

International and regional efforts to achieve disarmament make us hopeful of increasing international awareness of the need to rid the world of all weapons, because of their threat to international peace and security. Given Saudi Arabia's commitment to the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law, which are the cornerstones of its foreign policy, we pay special attention to strengthening the role of the United Nations in all fields, especially international peace and security and disarmament. Saudi Arabia believes firmly that these issues are one, and that the world cannot live in peace and stability without them.

Proceeding from Saudi Arabia's position, which always calls for security for all, and its efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction throughout the world, it was one of the first countries to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It also refrained from producing or acquiring nuclear weapons or allowing a third party to place nuclear weapons on its soil. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia actively participated in the 2000 Review Conference on the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and adopted a positive position in efforts to reach a total ban on nuclear-weapon tests. It participated also in the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The Kingdom also commended the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 1996, which affirmed that all countries should be committed to continue the negotiations for the total elimination of nuclear weapons under tight and effective international supervision. It also actively participated in the efforts of the Arab League to formulate a treaty to make the Middle East an area free of weapons of mass destruction.

All these efforts and positions are true proof of the good intentions of Saudi Arabia regarding disarmament and international security issues, in addition to creating an international environment free from nuclear and other destructive weapons.

The success in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in certain areas of the world as a result of cooperation between the countries involved, and their belief in peaceful coexistence, is a positive step towards creating a world free from weapons of mass destruction. Regrettably, the Middle East is not free from nuclear weapons, because Israel still refuses to adhere to calls from the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to desist from developing, producing and testing nuclear weapons. Israel also refuses to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or to subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards system. It also shows no enthusiasm whatsoever for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Thus, Israel remains the only country in the region to possess nuclear and chemical weapons that are not subject to international supervision.

The Israeli position contradicts its pronouncements in favour of peace. Real peace should be founded on trust and good intentions among the countries and peoples of the region, and not on the possession of nuclear weapons, the threat to use them and attempts to impose its hegemonic will on other countries. These policies not only result in creating instability in the region, but also threaten international peace and security.

Accordingly, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls upon Israel, the only country in the region that has not yet acceded to the NPT, to take the necessary steps to do so immediately, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. All Israeli nuclear activities should be subjected to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards until the Middle East is free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Despite our belief in enhancing the efficiency of the NPT by strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system and making it universal, we believe that we should introduce controls and standards that enhance progress in the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1 (I) of 1946. Accordingly, we urge all States which have not yet acceded to the NPT to take the necessary steps to do so and subject their nuclear facilities to international inspection as a contribution to international peace and stability.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports transparency in armaments as one means to consolidate international peace and security. It also believes that

for transparency to succeed it must follow definite and clear principles that are balanced, comprehensive and non-discriminatory and that will strengthen national, regional and international security for all countries in accordance with international law.

In this regard, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms represents a first attempt by the international community to deal with transparency at the international level. Despite the possible value of the Register as one international means to build trust and as an early warning, it has faced some problems, most notable of which is that more than half the Member States of the United Nations have continuously declined to provide information to it. That fact should impel us to deal effectively with the fears of those States, in a manner that guarantees international participation.

In this regard, my country affirms the response of the members of the League of Arab States to the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/312, dated 28 August 1997, on the Register. This affirms that an enlarged Register in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, which established the Register, should include information on advanced conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia declares its hopes and aspirations for the creation of an international community in which peace, stability and coexistence prevail for the prosperity of all mankind.

Mr. Bakoniarivo (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): At this session the First Committee has chosen U Mya Than to take charge of its work. We very much appreciate his election to the chairmanship of this major Committee and sincerely congratulate him and the other members of the Bureau. My delegation assures him of its cooperation as he carries out his mandate.

We begin our work in a climate tinged with an optimism resulting from the encouraging commitments made by many world leaders at the Millennium Summit, but also a climate fraught with concern in a constantly changing world facing a wide variety of threats. The international peace and security to which we all aspire has still not become a reality, notwithstanding positive elements in the negotiating process in certain parts of the world. This year's report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization makes it clear that the nature of the threats to peace and security has changed since the end of the cold war, having moved from international conflicts to civil wars and from border violations to the violation of the rights of the individual.

It is all the more alarming, therefore, to note that in 1999, for the first time in the post-cold-war period, military expenditures rose, taking total spending to approximately $780 billion, or 2.6 per cent of the global gross national product. The solemn commitment by numerous world leaders to

> "spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war"

and to

> "seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction" (*A/RES/55/2, para. 8*)

came at just the right time to help to usher in a new era in international relations.

We were also strengthened in our conviction by the positive outcome of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), when for the first time in 15 years such a conference was able to adopt its Final Document by consensus. My delegation hopes that this decisive step will open the way to significant and tangible progress in nuclear disarmament, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

In this context, Madagascar, given our commitment to the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace, particularly welcomes the recent accession to the NPT of four States of our region, and hopes that this step will be followed by the other States of the zone that have not yet become parties.

The seriousness of the nuclear threat hanging over mankind leaves no justification whatever for keeping such weaponry for any period, or in any form. In this vein, Madagascar supports the proposal to convene an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers. Madagascar hopes, moreover, that the unequivocal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals will be translated into deeds in the first few years of this new millennium.

Consideration of mankind's supreme interests leads my delegation to believe that a State's greatness should be measured not by its military potential, but by

its effective contribution to fostering full development of the human potential in a safer environment, free from fear. Similarly, Madagascar reaffirms its conviction that international peace and security must be based not on the arms race, but on relationships of confidence and reciprocal esteem between States. Transparency with regard to arms is essential in promoting the relationships of trust that are indispensable in consolidating peace. It is in that spirit that Madagascar contributes to implementing resolution 54/43 of 1 December 1999, "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures", as indicated in document A/55/272.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to cause concern to the international community, because of their involvement in the increased number and prolongation of conflicts. Although light in weight, they have substantial consequences, including the disruption of social and economic structures and a heavy toll in human lives. They undoubtedly caused most of the destruction and violent deaths of the twentieth century. It is deplorable that more than 5 million people, 90 per cent of them civilians, have lost their lives in the 170 wars that have broken out since the end of the cold war, including those still being waged.

Eliminating the scourge of small arms proliferation, which not only threatens international peace and security, but also hampers the socio-economic development of many countries, requires that the international community adopt a united and coordinated approach. In this sense, it is important that we do not lose sight of the implications of economic underdevelopment and other factors that spawn and breed the insecurity that drives the continuous demand for arms.

As Africa is the continent hardest hit by this problem, Madagascar supports the recommendations of the group of African experts on small arms and light weapons that met in Addis Ababa from 17 to 19 May this year, notably regarding the prevention and reduction of the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, along with the policies, institutional arrangements and operational measures to tackle this problem. We also endorse the Group's call for suppliers do everything necessary to further African initiatives for controlling and reducing the proliferation of and illicit trade in these weapons, in particular by involving the suppliers in dialogue. Madagascar hopes that the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will lead to the establishment of an international juridical framework to slow the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and to the devising of a code of conduct governing arms transactions.

My delegation believes that recommendations from the Conference should include international standards for marking small arms and light weapons and related ammunition, as well as for certificates of use and for monitoring arms brokerage. In the search for ways and means to fight this scourge, Madagascar will support all proposals designed to limit the right to manufacture and sell small arms and light weapons to producers and merchants authorized by States. In the final analysis, strategies for coping with this problem should include a definition of the legitimate place of small arms and light weapons in global society; consideration of steps to limit them to clearly defined areas; and the promotion of their elimination from situations in which they have no place.

Whether in the realm of weapons of mass destruction or of conventional arms, general and complete disarmament must remain the ultimate goal for building a world of peace and progress. To attain the goal of cutting poverty in half by 2015, the international community must seriously examine the link between disarmament and development. The upward trend in military expenditures and their impact on national and international development strategies must be reversed, so that States can transfer resources now driving the arms race spiral into socio-economic development. The fact is that, notwithstanding progress made by certain countries in terms of their development, it is still far outweighed by military expenditures. In at least 84 countries military expenditures exceed health spending. Nuclear arms alone have devoured approximately $8 trillion, one third of the world's total output in 1997.

As the melting pot of universal values, the United Nations has an essential role to play in promoting the culture of peace and advancing the cause of disarmament. We express our gratitude to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his dedication to that end. We realize that the road to general and complete disarmament is long and hard. However, we are confident that our joint

determination, reflected in the Millennium Declaration, to make this new century also a new era will guide us in building a world that gives all its people a chance to make their dreams come true.

On that hopeful note I wish us all success in our work, so that what we do here will further the vast undertaking of bringing about a better future for mankind.

Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus): I congratulate the Chairman on his well-deserved election and assure him of my delegation's full support. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Let me at the outset express our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for his excellent statement and his devotion and tireless efforts in the field of disarmament.

The Republic of Cyprus aligns itself with the statement delivered by the French presidency on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, and I will thus limit my comments to some issues of particular concern to my country.

Last spring the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) adopted a consensus Final Document at their Review Conference. Under the leadership of Ambassador Abdallah Baali of Algeria, the parties bridged their differences and, despite the uncertain international context in which the Conference was taking place, the international community demonstrated a remarkable commitment and determination to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and work towards the full realization of the goals of the Treaty. We warmly welcome the unequivocal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, and we fully share the view expressed by many speakers that the international community has to make every effort to build upon the successful outcome of the Conference.

We congratulate the Russian Federation on the recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and START II. As regards the bilateral arms reduction process, we support the prompt entry into force and timely implementation of START II and the early commencement of negotiations on START III with a view to achieving further reductions in strategic nuclear weapons.

Cyprus fully supports the consolidation of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important component of our goal of a nuclear-free world. In this respect, we attach great importance to their expansion, and in particular the establishment of such zones in areas of tension, including one in our own region.

Two years ago when addressing the Committee I raised the issue of the decision of the Turkish Government to build a nuclear power plant in a highly seismic area in south-eastern Turkey. I referred to the obvious environmental consequences of that decision for all the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean and the potential risk to international peace and security. We note with satisfaction that the Turkish Government has provisionally suspended this project, and we urge that it finally be cancelled altogether.

During the past year Cyprus has joined both the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Australia Group. I take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the member States of both groups for their support for our candidature and to reiterate my Government's firm commitment to the cause of the prevention of the illicit transfer and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related dual-use goods and technologies.

I should also like to refer briefly to the Conference on Disarmament and to join previous speakers in expressing our concern over its continuing inability to undertake substantive work, including the immediate commencement of negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty. With regard to the Conference's membership, the Republic of Cyprus reiterates its wish to participate fully in the work of the sole multilateral forum in the field of disarmament. We firmly believe that further enlargement of the Conference would in no way hinder its effectiveness. On the contrary, the Conference's reform and its expansion to all those wishing to participate in its work might give it a new impetus.

Illicit trafficking in small arms is an issue of grave concern. We are fully supportive of all national, regional and international efforts with regard to this phenomenon, and consider that more effective action to eliminate it is an imperative need in an increasingly interdependent world. The cost to human life and the economies and social fabric of many societies stemming from our inaction is simply unacceptable. We are encouraged by the international attention given

to the problem, culminating in the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in 2001.

We recognize that much more needs to be done with regard to conventional weapons. However, we are much encouraged by the overwhelming response of the international community to the ban on anti-personnel mines. I wish to reiterate in this respect that, despite the continuing foreign occupation of almost 40 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, we decided to sign the relevant Convention as an expression of our determination to join the international community in its efforts to eliminate this totally inhumane method of warfare. Against the background of the constant threat posed by the 36,000 occupation troops stationed on the island, we consider our decision to be a further demonstration of our strong commitment to disarmament and respect for multilateral norms, such as that set by the Ottawa Convention.

We are currently engaged in proximity talks under the auspices of the Secretary-General in order to reach a just, workable and lasting solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of Security Council resolutions. A matter of great concern for both the Government and the people of Cyprus, is the issue of security. In this context, I recall once again the proposal made by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Glafcos Clerides, for the demilitarization of the Republic of Cyprus, which we consider to be a genuine offer for peace on the island and in the region at large. President Clerides's proposal calls for a specific programme aimed at the dismantling of all local military forces, the withdrawal of all foreign forces and settlers from the territory of the Republic of Cyprus and its demilitarization, as stipulated in the relevant United Nations resolutions. The proposal also envisages the stationing in Cyprus of an international force with an appropriate mandate from the Security Council.

Our President has stated that our proposals and suggestions are still valid and timely, and as such they remain on the negotiating table, for we remain committed to seeking a solution to the problem by peaceful means, and we will continue to exert every effort towards that end.

We have always advocated that the reduction of forces and armaments can reduce the risk of an outbreak of a military conflict and can therefore contribute to confidence-building and conflict resolution. We strongly believe that peace and security can be achieved only through the implementation of a collective international security system. We, like others, are encouraged by recent developments in the areas of disarmament and arms control, culminating in the unprecedented outcome of the landmark 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We therefore agree with the Secretary-General that, as stated in his report to the Organization, that above all else what we need is a reaffirmation of political commitment at the highest level to proceed towards the realization of our lofty goals.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): I begin by congratulating the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau on their election.

This session of the Committee is the first opportunity in the twenty-first century for us to thoroughly discuss issues related to arms control and disarmament and to seek ways to eliminate dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

Armenia affirms the crucial role of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) for international peace and security in eliminating the proliferation of nuclear weapons, both horizontal and vertical, and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We believe that these two objectives, enshrined in the Treaty, will continue to serve the vital interests of all States parties for years to come. As the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, rightly observed in his recent address to the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

> "progress in the disarmament field tends to reflect the general political climate of the day".

The review period since 1995 has been marked by both achievements and setbacks for the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, which ran parallel with both the positive and unwelcome developments on the global and regional scene.

Of course, further efforts are needed to involve in the nuclear non-proliferation regime those States that have not yet acceded to the Treaty. The problem of the proliferation of nuclear weapons is global, and the NPT is a global rather than a regional Treaty. However, it is

essentially regional security problems that stand in the way of achieving the NPT's universality.

The recent 2000 NPT Review Conference was crowned with success, with the adoption of the Final Document by consensus. We consider the measures agreed in it to be an essential contribution to the cooperation of nuclear and non-nuclear States in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I should also like to point out that one of the landmark achievements of the Conference is the expression of the need to develop verification mechanisms guaranteeing the implementation of each arrangement. The outcome of the Conference itself and the scope of the agreed measures are positive steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Armenia supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones that are freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned. In 1995 two new treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa were signed. We also back any new proposals for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions of the world where the States concerned have reached a consensus among themselves prior to seeking international consideration.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is the first disarmament agreement negotiated within a multilateral framework that provides for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Its scope, the obligations assumed by States parties and the system of verification envisaged for its implementation are unprecedented. The lessons learned from the establishment and successful implementation of the Convention should encourage other similar initiatives in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation to achieve equally tangible results.

Recently we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). The Convention has made an important contribution to the world community's collective efforts to eliminate the threat of weapons of mass destruction. The strong commitment of States parties to the Convention led them to establish in 1994 an Ad Hoc Group, open to all States parties, for the consideration of appropriate measures, including possible verification measures, to be included in a legally binding instrument with a view to strengthening the Convention.

Armenia welcomes the significant decision of the State Duma of the Russian Federation to ratify START II. This landmark decision not only constitutes an achievement in nuclear disarmament in itself, but also opens the way for the commencement of negotiations on START III, as was previously agreed between the United States and Russia. We also welcome the readiness of Russia, upon the successful consummation of START III, to further reduce ceilings of deployed strategic warheads to 1,500, which will mark a major step by the Russian Federation and the United States towards the fulfilment of their obligations under article VI.

We are facing yet another danger now: the growing pressure to deploy national missile defences. Armenia is really concerned that their deployment could lead to a new arms race, set back nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation policies, and create new incentives for missile proliferation. We hope that the relevant States will take these factors into consideration before taking steps which could jeopardize the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, thus reducing rather than enhancing global security.

There is no need to confirm the vital role the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays in meeting the challenges the international community faces in the areas of peace and development. By preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, improving and strengthening nuclear safety, and helping to develop the peaceful uses of nuclear technology for sustainable development, the Agency makes a unique contribution to the purposes of global peace and prosperity.

I should like to turn first to the Agency's role in seeking to prevent nuclear proliferation. Despite some progress in the reduction of nuclear weapons — in particular, the Russian Federation's ratification of the START II agreement — there is still deep concern within the international community over the major threat that such weapons continue to pose to international peace and security.

Armenia, demonstrating its commitment to the non-proliferation regime, has become one of the initial signatories of the Additional Protocol. Despite its legitimate security concerns, Armenia has forgone outright the option of having on its territory any types

of weapons of mass destruction. On 24 September 1991, just three days after Armenia declared its independence, the Armenian Parliament adopted a decision to abide by the NPT. Shortly after its formal accession to the Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State in 1993, we concluded a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. That made it possible for us to reactivate our peaceful nuclear programme with the assistance of the IAEA and to solve the drastic energy crisis in the country.

We are all aware that the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) is the cornerstone of European security. The adaptation of the Treaty at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summit in November 1999 constituted an important achievement in the field of conventional arms control. Armenia actively participated in the negotiations on the adaptation of the Treaty, and considers it to be an important step towards the new security environment of our region. With the other States parties to the Treaty, Armenia has undertaken to move forward expeditiously to facilitate completion of national ratification procedures so that the agreement on adaptation can enter into force as soon as possible. We hope that the transparency and predictability provided by the CFE Treaty will contribute to regional stability.

The problem of the destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons has gained prominence on the international agenda over recent years. This prioritization is a logical conclusion of the negative consequences arising from large accumulations and flows of such weapons. In this context, we will support all efforts by the international community at the international, regional and subregional levels to prohibit the illegal manufacture and transfer of small arms. In the United Nations, sets of recommendations for measures to prevent and reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons were agreed in the 1997 and 1999 reports of United Nations experts on small arms. We attach great importance to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Armenia welcomes the increasing momentum to achieve a global ban on the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines. We also welcome the unilateral moratoriums announced by individual States on the production, sale, transfer, import or use of anti-personnel mines. Notwithstanding Armenia's security considerations and the defensive value of anti-personnel mines, we believe that the human and social costs of landmines far outweigh their military significance. Armenia's full participation in the Ottawa Convention is contingent upon a similar level of political commitment by the other parties in the region to adhere to the Convention.

Armenia is not a party to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). However, the Armenian Government is considering the possibility of acceding to the Amended Protocol II on landmines. In the light of this, we decided, on a voluntary basis, to submit the annual report required under articles 11 and 13, and to contribute to improving the coordination and effectiveness of global mine action. In this context, I should also like to thank the United States Government for its readiness to assist regional States in humanitarian demining projects and its organization of joint humanitarian demining training programmes in Georgia for three regional States as a confidence- and security-building measure in the region.

In conclusion, Armenia looks forward to actively participating in the work of the First Committee this year.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine): On behalf of the delegation of Ukraine let me congratulate U Mya Than on his assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident that with his skilful guidance, and support from all delegations, the work of our body will be successful and productive.

Less than a month ago an outstanding forum of historic significance was held at the United Nations. The Millennium Summit became a unique occasion for the heads of State and Government to express their views and exchange opinions concerning the most fundamental challenges to be addressed by the international community at the turn of the new millennium. It proved once again that the issues of international peace and security, arms control and disarmament remain among the imperative priorities for humankind.

A decade ago the Declaration on the State Sovereignty of Ukraine was adopted. By this document my country solemnly proclaimed its intention to adhere to three non-nuclear principles — not to accept, produce or acquire nuclear weapons. By turning over

the pages of a calendar of the last 10 years, one may ascertain that Ukraine reliably put these principles into practice by fulfilling the relevant treaties on nuclear non-proliferation and on nuclear-weapons reduction, and by ensuring simultaneously their strict implementation. The removal of all nuclear weapons from Ukraine's territory more than four years ago was a significant event in this context.

We welcome ratification of START II by the Russian State Duma earlier this year, which we believe will boost the process of nuclear arms reduction by the United States and Russia. In our view, it could also provide an additional impetus to the negotiation process on nuclear disarmament with the participation of all nuclear-weapon States.

In this context, we would like to point out that Ukraine continues to follow closely the developments around the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. From our perspective, the future of the agreements establishing the basis for the maintenance of strategic stability in the world largely depends on the fate of this Treaty. Ukraine remains committed to the ABM Treaty and recognizes its fundamental value in ensuring continuity of the strategic arms reduction process.

My country assessed positively the announcement by President Clinton of postponement of the decision concerning the development of a limited national missile defence. At the same time, the uncertainty of the issue of succession under the ABM Treaty is, from our point of view, a factor negatively affecting its viability and effectiveness.

We welcome the ratification by the Russian Federation of the so-called package of New York agreements to the ABM Treaty signed in 1997, and call upon other parties to follow suit. Those documents will be considered and, hopefully, ratified by the Ukrainian Parliament during its current session.

My country is encouraged by the outcome of the sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is of particular importance that the Final Document of the Conference reflects an agreement of the five nuclear-weapon States to take further practical steps towards the implementation of article VI. The fact that the States parties were able to reach consensus on the Final Document is truly remarkable, especially against the background of the thirtieth anniversary of the NPT's entry into force.

The Final Document also recorded a consensus of the States parties that the elimination of nuclear weapons is

> "the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use"

of such weapons. In other words, nuclear doctrines and deterrence concepts are not sufficient to eliminate totally the risk of repetition of the nuclear holocaust. We fully realize, however, that, despite the momentum that the Review Conference gave to the pursuit of further disarmament and non-proliferation goals, not all the problems and difficulties have been overcome, and that there is much challenging work to be done to ensure the implementation of the steps agreed by the Conference.

The Final Document also stipulates two important issues related directly to the Conference on Disarmament: the immediate commencement of negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty, with a view to their conclusion within five years, and the necessity of establishing an appropriate subsidiary body. Regrettably, the situation within the Conference on Disarmament is characterized by lack of real progress, and Ukraine is really concerned about it. Still, we believe that the results of the 2000 NPT Review Conference will have a positive impact on the negotiation process in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

My country continues to strictly abide by its commitments pursuant to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). We believe that the conclusion of negotiations on the verification protocol to the Convention, and its subsequent effective and comprehensive implementation, fully serves the far-reaching interests of the international community.

Full implementation of the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, the CWC, is among the priorities for Ukraine in the sphere of arms control and disarmament. No effort should be spared to achieve the main goal of the Convention — the complete elimination of one of the most hideous types of weapons of mass destruction. It is important that the States parties should be provided with the necessary assistance in their efforts to meet time-frames envisaged for the destruction of chemical weapons and the relevant production facilities. I am pleased to underline that the National Authority of Ukraine for CWC implementation continues its fruitful cooperation

with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

At the crossroads of two millenniums the problems related to certain types of conventional weapons, such as anti-personnel landmines, small arms and light weapons, have reached the same critical level of importance as the issues of non-proliferation and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We are confident that the 2001 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) will elaborate further steps directed at the progressive marginalization of anti-personnel landmines and their role in military doctrines, and at the effective protection of civilians from their use. At the same time, Ukraine remains devoted to the goal of the Ottawa Convention: a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. Its provisions are being implemented in my country.

We fully share international concern regarding the problems created by the continuing increase in the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Ukraine is prepared to work further in search of the mutually acceptable approaches to the solution of this complex issue, particularly in the course of the preparatory process for, and during, the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Light Weapons and Small Arms in All Its Aspects. We are convinced that the Conference will be able to find solutions to this problem.

In conclusion, I express our hope that the coming years will be marked by new important achievements in arms control and disarmament, thus paving the way to a more secure and safer world. We are convinced that the First Committee will continue to play an outstanding role in this regard.

Mr. Moraru (Republic of Moldova): At the outset I join previous speakers in congratulating the Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau, on their well-deserved election. I am confident that under his chairmanship our deliberations will be successful. I also express the appreciation of our delegation to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for his opening statement and his continuing efforts in support of disarmament.

As we enter a new century and a new millennium, we must intensify our efforts to strengthen international peace and security. To this end, continuing progress in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation is absolutely vital.

This year the international community strongly reaffirmed, in a number of forums, the importance of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. In particular, the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has strengthened the basic provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as an instrument to deal with nuclear weapons and to promote nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. At the same time, the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals brought further clarification of their obligation to implement article VI of the Treaty pertaining to nuclear disarmament. This historic commitment is of particular relevance, especially since, unlike other legal multilateral instruments banning weapons of mass destruction, the NPT does not prohibit nuclear weapons as such, but only their proliferation. At the Millennium Summit world leaders also stated their resolve to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

The Republic of Moldova welcomes these important positive developments, and considers that they represent excellent opportunities for the achievement of a major breakthrough in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation in the twenty-first century. In our view, it is imperative to capitalize on this momentum and to take practical steps to implement the package of decisions adopted at the sixth NPT Review Conference.

From this perspective, the Republic of Moldova calls for the overcoming of the stagnation in negotiations on the relevant treaties supporting nuclear non-proliferation, and for developing more constructive attitudes within the Conference on Disarmament. This will create, in our opinion, favourable premises for a more active disarmament process, which should lead to the adoption of implementable and verifiable nuclear disarmament measures in the future.

The Republic of Moldova is concerned that the process of nuclear disarmament could be seriously hampered as a result of the lack of progress towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and differences on the Anti-

Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. We therefore call upon all States whose signature and ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT to sign and ratify it at the earliest date possible. At the same time, they should reaffirm the role of the ABM Treaty as the cornerstone of international peace, security and strategic stability.

The Republic of Moldova supports transparency in armaments as one important means of consolidating international peace and security. We fully share the view that an increased level of transparency in armaments contributes greatly to confidence-building and security among States, and that the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations standardized reporting system constitutes an important step forward in the promotion of transparency in military matters. With a view to achieving universal participation, Moldova this year provided the requested data and information on military expenditures, and it will continue to do so in the future.

While most arms control efforts focus on weapons of mass destruction and heavy conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons designed for military use are responsible for killing and injuring thousands of innocent people in armed conflicts throughout the world. We share the view that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of many symptoms of increased intra-State conflicts since the end of the cold war. Although the accumulation and illegal circulation of small arms and light weapons does not in itself cause conflict, their excessive accumulation has exacerbated internal conflicts, complicated peace-building and undermined peace agreements in many countries, including my own.

In numerous countries, especially in those affected by separatist movements, stocks are stolen for use by paramilitaries or sold off along with illegally produced armaments in other zones of conflict. This phenomenon is characteristic of the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova, controlled by a separatist regime. This zone is over-militarized. In recent years there has been recorded in this region the illegal production of different types of armaments, including small arms, light weapons and anti-personnel landmines. Through some third countries these types of armaments have reached other conflict zones, supporting terrorist and criminal groups as well as secessionist movements.

At the same time, there are stockpiled in the region huge quantities of armaments, including both accounted for and unaccounted for Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty)-limited equipment belonging to the foreign troops still stationed there. Cases have also been recorded of armaments leaking from those stocks to separatist illegal paramilitaries. Therefore, it is very important to take measures aimed at withdrawing foreign military arsenals and troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with the Istanbul summit decisions. In this context, I should like to express our gratitude for the financial assistance provided by a number of States to eliminate or withdraw the armaments and ammunition I have mentioned.

Taking into account also the complicated situation in the Transdniestrian region, the Government of Moldova is taking measures to strengthen national legislation on export control. Last year the Moldovan Parliament adopted a law regulating the trade in military equipment, armaments and other military-technical equipment. Although that legislation does not currently extend to the Transdniestrian region, the Government has established additional mobile customs posts along the border with this region. These posts will also be tasked with overseeing the implementation of the new law on import and export controls.

The dimensions of the threat posed by small arms require us to act globally. That is why the Republic of Moldova strongly supports the efforts to create effective international mechanisms for the prevention of their illegal transfers, especially in conflict and post-conflict areas. The international Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held next year, will be an important opportunity to address this issue comprehensively. We hope that it can agree on a concrete action plan in the global, regional and national context.

The Republic of Moldova fully supports the efforts of the international community to strengthen the multilateral legal instruments aimed at reducing the suffering of combatants and civilians in armed conflicts. It therefore acceded on 8 September 2000 to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and gave its consent to be bound by its four Protocols. Moreover, the Parliament of Moldova ratified the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines this year. The full participation of all States, including large ones, and their compliance remain

essential preconditions for the effectiveness of every disarmament regime. We therefore call upon all States that have not yet done so to take all measures to become parties to these important conventions.

Finally, I should like to emphasize that national, regional and international efforts to curb the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, and the prohibition of certain conventional arms that have indiscriminate effects, including anti-personnel landmines, can be successful only with international assistance and cooperation. Therefore, the international community should mobilize the necessary funding to provide the required financial and technical assistance to all countries, especially those in need, so that the affected countries are better able to implement effective arms controls or to eliminate such weapons.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in French*): I remind members that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions has been set at 6 p.m. tomorrow, Friday, 13 October. It will be strictly observed. I urge members to submit draft resolutions as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.